

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for performing a category search to identify categories of items that relate to a search term, the method comprising:

receiving at least one search term;
comparing the search term with a hierarchy of category identifiers to determine whether matches exist;
comparing the search term with terms related to one or more categories to determine whether matches exist; and
displaying at least a category identifier based on the matches that are determined to exist with the hierarchy and the terms.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein:

receiving at least one search term comprises:
receiving several search terms, and
grouping the search terms received as a single string;
comparing the search term with the hierarchy of category identifiers comprises comparing the single string of search terms with the hierarchy of category identifiers to determine whether matches exist; and
comparing the search term with the terms related to one or more categories comprises comparing the single string of search terms with the terms related to one or more categories to determine whether matches exist.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the terms related to one or more categories include a name and a description of a web site corresponding to a category.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the hierarchy of category identifiers comprises an ordered list of category names arranged in order from broad categories to narrow categories with the narrowest category being a final category name.

1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein displaying at least a category identifier
2 includes communicating at least a category identifier based on the matches that are
3 determined to exist with the hierarchy and the terms.

1 6. The method of claim 1 wherein displaying at least a category identifier
2 includes displaying several category identifiers, the method further comprising ranking the
3 category identifiers based on a number of the matches that are determined to exist and at least
4 one of locations and types of the matches.

1 7. The method of claim 6 wherein ranking the category identifiers based on the
2 location of the matches includes ranking the category identifiers based on the relative
3 location of the matches within the hierarchy of category identifiers.

1 8. The method of claim 6, wherein the ranking the category identifiers based on
2 the types of the matches includes ranking the category identifiers based on whether the
3 matches occur with at least one of the terms related to one or more categories or with the
4 hierarchy of category identifiers.

1 9. The method of claim 8 wherein category identifiers that include matches that
2 occur with both the hierarchy of category identifiers and the terms related to one or more
3 categories are ranked higher than category identifiers that include matches that occur with
4 only one of the hierarchy of category identifiers and the terms related to one or more
5 categories.

1 10. The method of claim 6 wherein category identifiers that include matches that
2 occur with more than one type are ranked higher than category identifiers that include
3 matches that occur within only one of the types.

1 11. The method of claim 6 wherein category identifiers that include matches that
2 occur with the hierarchy of category identifiers are ranked higher than category identifiers
3 that include matches that occur with the terms related to one or more categories.

1 12. The method of claim 6 wherein the hierarchy of category identifiers comprises
2 an ordered list of category names arranged in order from broad categories to narrow
3 categories with the narrowest category being a final category name such that category
4 identifiers that include matches that occur with the final category name of the hierarchy of
5 category names are ranked higher than category names that include matches that occur at a
6 location other than the final category name.

1 13. The method of claim 1 wherein the items comprise web sites.

1 14. A method for performing a search to identify items and categories of items
2 that relate to a search term, the method comprising:
3 receiving at least one search term;
4 comparing the search term with a list of recommended items to determine whether
5 matches exist;
6 comparing the search term with previously performed searches to determine whether
7 matches exist;
8 comparing the search term with a hierarchy of category identifiers and terms related
9 to one or more categories to determine whether matches exist; and
10 displaying results based on matches that are determined to exist.

1 15. The method of claim 14 further comprising comparing the search term with an
2 electronic information store that includes full text of different web pages from different web
3 sites to determine whether matches exist.

1 16. The method of claim 15 wherein receiving at least one search term comprises:
2 receiving several search terms; and
3 grouping the search terms received as a single string.

1 17. The method of claim 15 wherein the items comprise web sites and displaying
2 results comprises displaying a list of recommended sites, a list of related searches, a list of
3 category identifiers, and a list of web site identifiers.

1 18. The method of claim 15 further comprising conducting a world wide web
2 search using the search term when less than a threshold number of matches occurs.

1 19. The method of claim 18 further comprising conducting a search of an
2 electronic information store that includes full text of proprietary content.

1 20. The method of claim 14 wherein the items comprise web sites.

1 21. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for performing a
2 category search to identify categories of items that relate to a search term, comprising
3 instructions for:

4 receiving at least one search term;

5 comparing the search term with a hierarchy of category identifiers to determine
6 whether matches exist;

7 comparing the search term with terms related to one or more categories to determine
8 whether matches exist; and

9 displaying at least a category identifier based on the matches that are determined to
10 exist with the hierarchy and the terms.

1 22. The computer program of claim 21 wherein the computer readable medium
2 comprises a propagated signal.

1 23. The computer program of claim 22 wherein the propagated signal comprises a
2 carrier wave.

1 24. The computer program of claim 23 wherein items comprise web sites and the
2 terms related to one or more categories include a name and a description of a web site
3 corresponding to a category.

1 25. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for performing a
2 search to identify web sites and categories of web sites that relate to a search term,
3 comprising instructions for
4 receiving at least one search term;
5 comparing the search term with a list of recommended web sites to determine
6 whether matches exist;
7 comparing the search term with previously performed searches to determine whether
8 matches exist;
9 comparing the search term with a hierarchy of category identifiers and terms related
10 to one or more categories to determine whether matches exist; and
11 displaying results based on matches that are determined to exist.

1 26. The computer program of claim 25 wherein the computer readable medium
2 comprises a propagated signal.

1 27. The computer program of claim 26 wherein the propagated signal comprises a
2 carrier wave.

1 28. The computer program of claim 27 further comprising instructions for
2 comparing the search term with an electronic information store that includes full text of
3 different web pages from different web sites to determine whether matches exist.

1 29. The computer program of claim 28 wherein the instructions for receiving at
2 least one search term comprise instructions for:
3 receiving several search terms; and
4 grouping the search terms received as a single string.

1 30. The computer program of claim 28 wherein the instructions for displaying
2 results comprises instructions for displaying a list of recommended sites, a list of related
3 searches, a list of category identifiers, and a list of web site identifiers.



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